

When I first saw Michael Bay's Transformers in 2007, I was captured. I had grown up collecting them before then and watching all the serialized television shows. The characters had morals and acted not for the sake of violence but because if they turned to chaos and cowardice, the outcome would be much, much worse. Then I saw the first live action movie and was overcome by the weight of one specific line.

Shia LaBeouf's character, Sam Witwicky, says this line after a big action scene in a junkyard between his new 'car' and a scary cop car, "Fifty years from now, when you're looking back at your life, don't you want to be able to say you had the guts to get in the car?" If the protagonist, Sam, didn't say this to the love interest, there would be no movie. If he hadn't taken a risk, so many would have died. I guess it's a good thing I fixated (due to ASD/ADHD/Autism) on that line because it would prove very useful about a year later.

In the summer of 2008, there was a yearly Transformers convention and it was officially sponsored by the company that still owns Transformers; Hasbro. It was called BotCon (and as of 2022, it has come back after a hiatus.) I begged my mother to take me. I did not care about my disability. It was the first time in my life that I chose to become Master over my disability. She told me that there was no backing out. It was my first experience of having skin in the game. I had faith.

Lo and behold, I was amazed when we arrived. It was amazing. Instead of going on about all the amazing booths, artists, displays, I want to talk to you about a contest with a cash prize. It was for children and we just stumbled upon it. A woman working at the convention was asking parents and children if they wanted to enter a contest with first place getting a \$1,000 gift card to Hasbro's, now defunct, online shop. I said yes as soon as the word popped into my mind. My family had one stipulation: no backing out; no quitting. I agreed.

I went through all the brackets and I made it to the last contest and learned that it would be held either later that day or the next; I need to find out for sure. Well, the final one was being held on a stage and a handful of other children were competing. The challenge was to take a never-before-scene mold of a figure and 'convert' it from its robot mode to its alternate (vehicle) mode. I felt the fear of sensory meltdown come over me. I remember taking one step on the small staircase up to the stage and freezing.

I turned to my mother and she grabbed me vigorously and told me to get my ass up on that stage. I remember shaking my head *no*. I was scared. Now, I realize I was afraid of losing; of letting my family down. Then, when all the other parents surrounding us were near-yelling at my mother, she quoted the same line from the live action movie I mentioned earlier, "Fifty years from now, when you're looking back at your life, don't you want to be able to say you had the guts to get in the car?"

Now, she paraphrased it but, like most call-to-actions, quoting verbatim isn't required. It hit the spot. It shocked me out of my autistic inspired stupor and made me realize how much I would regret it if I gave up. I am anything but a quitter. I win because I must. That one sentence made me get back up on that stage, and win not first place but second place and a \$500 gift card to Hasbro's online store. I brought the entire first wave of tie-in-toys from a new cartoon that aired that year; Transformers Animated.

Later that summer, my family was in Beijing, China and my order decided to show up when I was half-way around the world. In April, 2008, I conquered my disability for the first time in my life. Then, a couple of months later, a little autistic, eight-year-old climbed the Great Wall of China. The lesson is this: when your own version of a sentient, extraterrestrial, robot shows up at your front door and asks you to get in; get in the fucking car. You never know the adventures you will have and the people you will reach.